

## Research Reviews

# Comparative Studies in Anthropology of the Interrelations Between Social and Technological Change

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The intent of this paper is to review some selected studies from the general field of culture change which feature comparative research as it has been applied to the interrelations of social and technological change. The scope and variety of the published materials are remarkable, as Lewis has pointed out:

There are comparisons between single culture traits, between institutions, between sub-cultures, between areas, nations and civilizations. There are synchronic and diachronic comparisons, controlled and uncontrolled, localized and global, formal and functional, statistical and typological.<sup>1</sup>

Some notable comparative studies of the past twenty-five years familiar to most readers are Benedict's discussion of ethos in several societies,<sup>2</sup> M. Mead's treatment of cultural variation in sex and temperament,<sup>3</sup> G. P. Murdock's statistical work on social structure,<sup>4</sup> J. M. W. Whiting and Irvin Child on the socialization of the child,<sup>5</sup> Walter Goldschmidt's intriguing comparative analysis of ethics and the structure of society,<sup>6</sup> and John M. Roberts' unique study of the Navaho.<sup>7</sup> The scale of the field of comparison is indicated in the recent article by Lewis<sup>8</sup> in which 248 publications for the years 1950-1954 are reviewed.

Since we are not prepared to undertake the monographic treatment which would be required to do justice to the entire range of studies, we shall consider only those studies, of whatever scale or level of comparison, which deal with the *cross-cultural investigation of "modernization," or the interrelations of social and technological change.*

## Selected Studies

Since even with the foregoing strictures it is not possible to review all the relevant studies, a number have been selected which are representative of types commonly found. As will become evident, these do not even share a common aim. Some deal with changes in institutions like marriage and the family;<sup>9</sup> others analyze the characteristics of whole cultures which predispose them towards modernization or inhibit change in that direction;<sup>10</sup> still others contrast communities with respect to differential change,<sup>11</sup> some with a view to proposing quantitative measures of change;<sup>12</sup> others attempt, by the presentation of numerous "cases," to extract generalizations concerning acceptance or rejection of innovations;<sup>13</sup> and others approach the entire problem from a high vantage point, taking the global view of man's cultural development throughout history.<sup>14</sup>

In her essay in the volume on marriage and family life in Africa, Mair<sup>15</sup> follows what has come to be almost the standard form of presentation of comparative materials on changing institutions. Following some remarks on the general character of African family and marriage, she discusses the continent by region, offering descriptive material on about one hundred tribes. Some of the headings under which the data are organized are "kinship and residence," "choice of partner," "effects of modern influences," "age of marriage," "pre- and extra-marital sex relations," and "domestic relations." As

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1. Oscar Lewis, "Comparisons in Cultural Anthropology," in William L. Thomas, Jr. (ed.), *Yearbook of Anthropology—1955*. New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, 1955, p. 260.

2. Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934.

3. Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. New York: William Morrow, 1935.

4. George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure*. New York: Macmillan, 1949.

5. John M. W. Whiting and Irvin L. Child, *Child Training and Personality: A Cross-Cultural Study*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953.

6. Walter Goldschmidt, "Ethics and the Structure of Society: An Ethnological Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge," *American Anthropologist*, 53, 4:506-524 (1951).

7. John M. Roberts, *Three Navaho Households: A Comparative Study in Small Group Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, XL, No. 3, 1951.

8. Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-292.

9. Lucy P. Mair, "African Marriage and Social Change," in Arthur Phillips (ed.), *Survey of African Marriage and Family Life*. London: Oxford University Press, 1953, pp. 1-172.

10. Marion J. Levy, Jr., "Contrasting Factors in the Modernization of China and Japan," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 2, 3:161-197.

11. Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941.

12. Alexander H. Leighton and Robert J. Smith, "A Comparative Study of Social and Cultural Change," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 99, 2: 79-88 (1955).

13. Edward H. Spicer (ed.), *Human Problems in Technological Change*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1952.

14. Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and Its Transformations*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1953.

15. Mair, *op. cit.*

the author points out, the nature of the material surveyed makes it impossible to use exactly the same set of categories for all groups, for she is working primarily from published reports not originally made with comparison in mind. And as we shall see, this is probably the greatest single handicap faced by the comparativist in anthropology. Mair's study ends with brief general conclusions which are largely descriptive of modern trends in marriage and family relationships throughout Negro Africa.

A very different kind of study is that by Levy on contrasting factors in the modernization of China and Japan, which presents a specific problem, comments on the method of analysis, and a list of the hypotheses to be tested. The statement of the problem is as follows:

This paper is concerned with strategic necessary but not sufficient conditions for Japan's apparent success in the relatively rapid and peaceful conversion from a markedly non-industrialized to a relatively highly industrialized society in so far as those conditions are to be found in the social structure of Japan and the new forces brought to bear on Japan.<sup>16</sup>

The author considers both countries during three stages of change from traditional to modernized societies, the "initial," "transitional" and "resultant," showing crucial differences between the two at these different periods. Similar institutional factors are dealt with for both countries, and notwithstanding the fact that the case for Japan is deliberately oversimplified, the paper stands as a model of historical comparison in anthropology. The very nature of the materials from which Levy had to work poses a problem, however, for it is clear that they were incomplete for the purposes at hand. The study suffers, therefore, from some of the same lacks noted also for Mair's institutional comparisons.

The significance for comparative studies of culture change of Robert Redfield's early work on the folk-urban continuum has been largely overlooked. In his study of Yucatan in particular, Redfield has presented evidence for four communities which occupy different positions on the continuum between folk and urban. These communities are compared synchronically with respect to a very large number of features, the aim being:

. . . to define the differences in the nature of isolated homogeneous society, on the one hand, and mobile heterogeneous society, on the other, so far as these kinds of societies are represented in Yucatan.<sup>17</sup>

But what is important, we are informed, is that the situation can be presented "as though the comparison represented a process illustrated at four stages of its course . . .,"<sup>18</sup> and further that the scheme of analysis offers questions so general as to be applicable to other societies at other times. What Redfield was offering, then, was a system which substituted for the study of changes in a single community through time, a synchronic survey of communities with particular spatial and historical relationships to serve the same purpose.

Notwithstanding the later modifications of this approach, and in fact, even because of them, this formulation has proved generative of a great deal of research. As a theory, it has had at least heuristic value, and we shall say more of this later. As Redfield himself has noted:

With others, I have found the imagined construction of a generalized typical primitive or folk society useful in directing attention to certain kinds of questions about societies and people. The conception asks special questions; it does not answer these; only particular facts can do that. . . . To describe the constructed folk society as one that is small, isolated, personal, and sacred is to imagine a limiting case of society that has qualities that real primitive societies tend to have, in that extreme degree still consistent with human living. It is not to assert that this combination is invariably present. It is to invite the facts . . .<sup>19</sup>

The article by Leighton and Smith has as one of its aims a comparison of seven communities in widely scattered parts of the world (India, Thailand, Burma, Japan, Peru, the Navajo Reservation, and the Canadian Maritimes) with a view to discovering descriptive generalizations about the process of modernization in the communities as technological change has become increasingly a feature of life. Four such general statements, based on the authors' own field work and that of colleagues engaged in parallel research, emerged:

1) A trend away from an economic system that was primarily self-contained and independent, toward a cash economy with dependence on a larger social grouping such as the state or nation.

2) A similar shift in governmental and political affairs from relative local autonomy to dependence on higher authority in the larger social group.

3) Changes in values, ideologies, and social usage which, although they constitute a break with the traditional and are increasingly influenced by outside forces, are not altogether in harmony with the economic and governmental trends noted above, or consistent with each other within a given community.

4) Progressive secularization of life, with an increasingly sharp line drawn between religion and other human activities such as work, governing and recreation.<sup>20</sup>

The aim here, obviously, is similar to that of Redfield, except that the communities are chosen at random from all over the world. It is very different from that of Levy, who has attacked the problem from the other end and at a different level, for the aim is not to analyze out those factors which make for differential response to modernization pressures, but rather to find the common trends of reaction to such pressures in highly diverse cultural settings. Certainly there is variation in detail in the ways in which the seven communities have begun to change from traditional patterns, but this study has moved the discussion from particulars to a level where broad descriptive generalizations can be made.

16. Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

17. Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

18. *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

19. Robert Redfield, "The Natural History of the Folk Society," *Social Forces*, 31, 3: 224 (1953).

20. Alexander H. Leighton and Robert J. Smith. *op. cit.*, pp. 81-82.

A pioneer effort of a very different sort in the field of comparative study of culture change is the volume edited by Spicer,<sup>21</sup> later followed by the Paul casebook.<sup>22</sup> Here the aim is not the spelling out of detailed comparison, but rather training in viewing a particular situation in the light of general social science knowledge. The application of such knowledge cross-culturally implies the same kind of continuous conscious comparison with other situations and other systems which in implicit form has long been the hallmark of anthropological work. In these volumes, a number of cases of successful and unsuccessful innovations are presented with a view of "educating" the student to formulate questions that are meaningful cross-culturally, to help him find common elements in the cases by means of which analysis of a single case can be facilitated, and to point out to him recurrent groups of problems which he may face. Some of these questions are:

What, if anything, will the introduced trait replace?

What other tools and techniques are likely to be modified as a result of the introduction?

What other tools and techniques will have to be modified if the new trait is accepted?

What are the attitudes toward the innovator (the field worker) as a person? Toward the ethnic group of which he is a member?

What is the recent history of the relations between the introducing group and the people?

What is the history of similar introductions to this group?<sup>23</sup>

Although directed primarily to those who are interested in application, this approach clearly is based on exactly the same procedures used in most cross-cultural studies of change—the asking of the right questions of very diverse data.

Redfield has turned increasingly to large-scale comparison with a particular emphasis on idealistic rather than materialist considerations in cultural growth and development. In the introduction to his *The Primitive World and Its Transformations*, he says:

In these pages I consider certain of the changes that were brought about in mankind by the advent of civilization. After the rise of cities men became something different from what they had been before. History is here conceived as the story of a single career, that of the human race. The emphasized event in that career, the turning point in the changes which mankind has undergone, is the passage from precivilized to civilized life.<sup>24</sup>

This is anthropological comparison in its widest possible dimension. The data are drawn from the author's own experience, as well as from a wide acquaintance with the literature of a great diversity of fields. The result is not a

typology nor a point by point comparison of societies or institutions or periods, but comments on the broad features of man's intellectual development throughout his history.

The Cornell University Studies in Culture and Applied Science are an example of a recent comparative study aimed specifically at the investigation of social, psychological and technological changes at the level of the little community in contemporary industrializing societies. Four communities have been studied, ranging in population from one to two thousand. They are the rice village of Bang Chan, about twenty miles from Bangkok in the central plain of Thailand; the agricultural village of Senapur, about twenty-five miles from Benares in Eastern U.P. in north central India; the hacienda Vicos, about two hundred and fifty miles northeast of Lima in the Andean area of Peru; and the irrigation resettlement project community of Fruitland on the Navaho Reservation, near the town of Farmington, New Mexico.

Studies completed include the contributions of anthropologists, social psychologists, linguists, economists, nutritionists and agricultural economists.<sup>25</sup> Experimental projects in the improvement of agriculture have been initiated in all four communities, with detailed analysis of factors responsible for predicted successes and unpredicted failures. On the Navaho Reservation, Cornell has sponsored small irrigated pasture projects and has been able to compare these with government-sponsored large field projects. In India, demonstrations of simple and inexpensive farm implements, new seed, new techniques and a local agricultural fair have provided the basis for follow-up studies which reveal the conditions under which villagers accept or reject innovations designed for their use. In Thailand, farm operators strategically located in the communications network were induced to try improved strains of rice, and the pattern of spread of these seeds is still being traced. In Peru, improved crops, new crops and new techniques of production have been introduced, and the reactions noted. The hacienda Vicos has offered a unique oppor-

#### 25. Some representative studies are:

Opler, Morris Edward and Rudra Datt Singh, "Caste and Village Organization in a Community of Northern India," in Carleton S. Coon (ed.), *A Reader in General Anthropology*. New York, 1948, pp. 464-496.

Cohn, Bernard S., "The Changing Status of A Depressed Caste," in McKim Marriott (ed.), *Village India: Studies in the Little Community*. Chicago, 1955, pp. 53-77.

Planalp, Jack, *Religious Life and Values in a Contemporary North Indian Village*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1955.

Opler, Morris Edward and Rudra Datt Singh, "Economic, Political and Social Change in a Village of North Central India," *Human Organization*, 11, 2: 5-12 (1955).

Sharp, Lauriston, Hazel M. Hauck, Kamol Janlekha, and Robert B. Textor, *Siamese Rice Village, A Preliminary Study of Bang Chan 1948-1949*. Bangkok, 1953.

Janlekha, Kamol Odd, *A Study of the Economy of a Rice Growing Village in Central Thailand*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1955.

Sasaki, Tom T., *Technological Change in a Navaho Indian Farming Community: A Study of Social and Psychological Processes*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1950.

Sasaki, Tom T. and David L. Olmstead, "Navaho Acculturation and English Language Skills," *American Anthropologist*, 55, 1: 89-99, 1953.

Shukry, Laila Sayid, *The Role of Women in a Changing Navaho Society*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1954.

Vazquez Varela, Mario C., "La Antropología Cultural y Nuevos Problemas del Indio," *Peru Indígena*, 2, 5 & 6: 7-143. 1952.

21. Edward H. Spicer, *op. cit.*

22. Benjamin D. Paul (ed.), *Health, Culture and Community*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1955.

23. Spicer, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

24. Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and Its Transformations*, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

tunity for studies of this sort owing to the fact that Cornell has been leasee, and the field director, therefore, *patrón* for five years.<sup>26</sup>

While the research early emphasized "planned" innovations, the course of events in all areas has required increasingly close attention. On the Navaho Reservation in particular, the accelerating tempo of change not inspired by Cornell project personnel has provided excellent opportunities for the observation of social and psychological effects of massive technological change. The outward movement of Navahos from the reservation has assumed such proportions that special studies have had to be made of adjustment, in one case to the urban situation of nearby Farmington, and in another to the mining town of Rico, Colorado, where Navahos are at work.<sup>27</sup> This phenomenon of actual and potential movement to urban industrial centers is of utmost importance in all the communities, and in each special projects have been developed to deal with it. Interest has centered on a number of inter-related problems: the selective forces pushing or pulling certain individuals out of the community, the nature of their experiences away from home, and the adjustment of the returned worker to the local situation.

Closely related to the problem of labor mobility is the question of the degree of relative local economic self-sufficiency and dependence on outside goods and service markets. Comparable systematic studies of economic conditions and trends in production, distribution and consumption in the field stations have been carried out. The changing roles of individuals in these communities have been examined through studies of the extent and character of knowledge and belief, of prestige ratings, of attitudes and values, and of tensions. Particular attention has been devoted to the universal sex and age strata, and to ideal concepts of the good man, the leader, the failure, and the aberrant, in order to determine the extent to which traditional ideal and modal roles govern or yield to new conceptions.

Among the most challenging problems facing the program has been the investigation of techniques for improving the capacity of individuals and groups to initiate action locally. Here the greatest contrast existed between the Indian and Thai communities. In the former, a formal, structured social organization inhibits activity relating to the whole community, while in loosely organized Thailand, there was no structure capable of dealing with village problems. In India, then, the problem has been to "loosen up" a compartmentalized organization which prevents interaction between some segments of the community; in Thailand, to develop an embryonic Buddhist temple committee into a secular council representing the functional community. In Peru, where the Indian hacienda population has no background for such organization, a group of leaders has been constituted as a committee to share in the planning and execution of a program of change for the hacienda. It is one of the principal conclusions of these efforts that unless change is to come only from

outside pressures, the creation and fostering of such local bodies is a necessary first step in undertaking developmental programs, for without these groups and the ideas associated with them, there is small chance of change at the local level.

Perhaps the major concern of all the projects has been that of selecting the level of comparison at which to present final conclusions. As indicated above and in the following section, there is no dearth of models for comparison. Some are so broad as to guarantee the omission of significant nuances; others are highly specific trait or item comparisons, often based on assumed but undemonstrated functional equivalence, and often of a class of itself not in itself relevant to the central problems of the research. Most promising are the possibilities in category or "aspect" comparison. An excellent example of this approach is that taken in Goldschmidt's treatment of ethics and the structure of society,<sup>28</sup> or what Lewis calls "descriptive, functional analyses of one or more aspects of culture,"<sup>29</sup> as distinct from more global comparisons.

Such comparisons focus attention on some characteristics of a system and largely ignore others, to be sure, but they make possible exhaustive and sensitive treatment of what research has led the project workers to believe are crucial aspects of the situations in all four communities. These include:

- 1) Factors making for unity and identity of the communities;
- 2) The relations of the field of knowledge to educational change;
- 3) The acquisition of "variant roles" and their relation to otherwise unpredictable and apparently sudden changes in the community;
- 4) Local organization of action and the relevance of this to what might be called the revolution of rising expectations in all these societies.

### The Methodology of Comparison in Anthropology

If a single point emerges from the foregoing review of some representative studies, it is that major methodological problems exist. However, it would seem that no one method of comparison will do, and Lewis asserts that:

It is part of the thesis of this paper that there is no distinctive "comparative method" in anthropology, and that the persistence of this expression has led to unnecessary confusion and artificial dichotomies in much of the theoretical writing on this subject. Thus, we prefer to discuss comparisons in anthropology rather than the comparative method. This simple semantic change makes a difference, for it highlights the fact that the method of a comparison is only one aspect of comparison, other relevant aspects being the aims or objectives, the content, and the location in space of the entities compared.<sup>30</sup>

While we would agree that the aims or objectives of the comparison are crucial in the selection of a method, the

26. Allan R. Holmberg, "Participant Intervention in the Field," *Human Organization*, 14, 1:23-26, 1955.

27. Ralph A. Luebben, *A Study of Some Off-Reservation Navaho Miners*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1955.

28. Goldschmidt, *op. cit.*

29. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

30. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

spatial distribution of the entities compared cannot be of much importance.

It is apparent that a global comparison of cultural development, which embraces all men at all times, will find the methodology required in community comparison of little utility. Similarly, if communities are to be compared as such, the procedures used in the comparison of institutions probably will not be relevant.

In almost no anthropological studies of the problem of comparative change has use been made of the rigorous methodology of the social psychologist or sociologist in the collection of data. There exist a multiplicity of reasons for this, some of which have been stated quite concisely by Suchman:

What is the best procedure a research worker could follow in order to increase the comparability of cross-group research? The answer to this question must be sought on both the theoretical and methodological levels. First and foremost, on the theoretical level, comparative researchers must agree upon conceptual definitions of the variables they wish to study and must evolve a common set of hypotheses. Such agreement is in itself at the present time a major obstacle to the development of a comparative field of study. . . . Of course there can be several sets of hypotheses, or even definitions of concepts to be tested. As long as we *know* what the alternative concepts or hypotheses are, they can be investigated. . . . What is needed is agreement on the conceptual map to be tested, not agreement on any one formulation as best. . . . Secondly, on the methodological level, one must face the problem of which methods and techniques are most likely to produce reliable and valid comparative results. Much of the current lack of comparability among existing data springs from the widely varying methods and techniques used in their collection.<sup>31</sup>

The Cornell Cross-Cultural Methodology Project is attempting to test and adapt existing methods for use in cross-group research. That the interests of this project differ somewhat from those of more traditional anthropological researchers is indicated perhaps by the following questions:

What is the goal of the comparative method? *Why* do we compare? What is the difference, if any, between comparative study as a substantive area and the comparative method as a research technique? . . . Where and how can we most productively attack the different problems of the comparative method? *How* do we compare? *Theoretically*, how can we formulate propositions or hypotheses for testing across group or cultural lines? *Methodologically*, what form of analytic proof must we bring to bear as relevant to cross-group generalization? *Technically*, what instruments and procedures can we use for the collection of comparative data? . . . How can we best meet the many administrative problems of cross-cultural research, i.e., language translation, lack of

trained native personnel, absence of basic statistical information, etc.<sup>32</sup>

Although the work of this project has not yet been fully reported, it may be noted that the attempt to use the same data-gathering techniques cross-culturally is one of great promise. We shall look forward to important methodological contributions when the data are analyzed.<sup>33</sup>

Anthropologists have generally been unable to compare data collected first-hand in numerous groups, and it was, of course, the uncritical use of secondary source material which eventually led to the comparative method of the nineteenth century, which Boas identified with evolutionary concepts in anthropology.<sup>34</sup> The issue now at hand is not basically the uncritical use of materials; it is the admitted inadequacy of data collected at different periods by various investigators for a diversity of purposes that now bedevils the researcher who wishes to compare anything.

The problem is particularly acute in the field of comparative culture change, for there are at least three fundamental requirements even one of which is seldom met by such studies:

- 1) The adequate definition of the units and concepts to be compared over time;
- 2) The postulation of the nature of the "change" being dealt with, in terms of its significance and duration;
- 3) The establishment of an adequate "baseline" picture of the situations being compared.

Much of the work published to date appears to be based on the hopeful assumption that things of practically any order can be compared in a common-sense way, and that definition of the units and concepts used need not be too rigorous.<sup>35</sup> There is, as a matter of fact, much to recommend this position, for very little of the available data are of sufficient precision or "fit" to make anything more than the most general descriptive comparisons possible. Certainly much statistical comparison has been carried out with data which are not nearly equal in quality to the techniques employed.<sup>36</sup>

This situation surely cannot persist much longer; presumably anthropology will not go on collecting data at random.<sup>37</sup> Comparison in anthropology must, of course, be based on solid foundations of accumulated data, as Kroeber writes:

32. *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.

33. See Rose K. Goldsen, "Summary of Design of Field Tasks for Methodology Study," Ithaca, New York, 1954. Manuscript.

34. Franz Boas, "The Limitations of the Comparative Method," in Franz Boas, *Race, Language and Culture*. New York: Macmillan, 1940, pp. 270-280.

35. A striking exception to this statement is Julian Steward *et al.*, *The People of Puerto Rico*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956.

36. See Murdock's *Social Structure* and Whiting and Child's *Child Training and Personality*, to name only two widely known studies.

37. This is not the same claim often made that anthropologists collect data "for their own sake." I am wholeheartedly behind the continued emphasis on so-called purely ethnographic studies. They serve a different purpose from the comparative studies, and deserve better than the present cavalier treatment given them in some quarters as "merely descriptive."

31. Edward A. Suchman, "Methodological Problems in Comparative Research," Paper prepared for the Conference on the Comparative Method in the Study of Politics, Social Science Research Council. Mimeographed, 1955, pp. 12-13.

All science or disinterested intellectual inquiry ultimately seeks knowledge of process. This must be preceded, however, by description of the properties of the form and substance of the phenomena, their ordering or classification upon analysis of their structure, and the tracing of their changes or events.<sup>38</sup>

Writing almost fifteen years before, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard had set the aim of comparison at midway in Kroeber's suggested development:

We speak for all social anthropologists when we say that a scientific study of political institutions must be inductive and comparative and aim solely at establishing and explaining the uniformities found among them and their interdependencies with other features of social organization.<sup>39</sup>

In short, whatever else comparative study was to do, it was not intended to touch on Kroeber's "changes or events."

In his book *The Dynamics of Culture Change*, Malinowski deals throughout with the problems of the comparative study of culture change in Africa, although the word comparison does not even appear in the index of the book.<sup>40</sup> The interest was not new, as is witnessed by the collection of papers to which he had written an introductory essay called "The Anthropology of Changing African Culture" just seven or eight years before.<sup>41</sup> But though his whole concern is with change and its study in various African tribes, he nowhere makes the point recently made by S. F. Nadel in his brilliant *The Theory of Social Structure*:

. . . there remain three conditions which we cannot satisfy, given the short range of our observations. (i) We cannot judge whether the options and choices actually made . . . represent some balance tending to produce cumulative effects and progressive trends. (ii) We cannot judge how far such trends are progressing at an even rate, in a 'moving equilibrium' or 'moving structure,' or will be attested at some point, in a structure so-and-so rearranged and stabilized. (iii) Nor can we judge whether such *de facto* options and choices as we have reason to regard as breaks in the pre-existing stability . . . are just that or form part of some self-compensating oscillation and pendulum swing, or again, of some progressive trend.<sup>42</sup>

What, then, is to be done? Obviously, one answer is to make studies in depth, maintaining researchers in the field for long periods of time, or sending them out periodically

over time. We are all aware of the difficulties confronting such a program. It is far more likely that the accumulation of data by many field workers will go on; what is needed is a concerted effort to integrate a series of studies and restudies in such a way that their results, both laterally and through time, will provide truly comparable material. Even so, Nadel points to a problem which will remain:

Though we shall never have the 'long runs' of the natural scientists . . . we can make them much longer than they are now. . . . Until such evidence is available, our judgments on stationary states, stability and instability, trends or oscillations, will remain working hypotheses, only partly verifiable.<sup>43</sup>

If we are to have studies in comparative change, we are faced with the vexed question of the baseline. Given even the funds and opportunity for a longitudinal study, how may an adequate initial baseline be established? It is a notorious fact that as a longitudinal study develops, research interests may shift to such an extent that the data collected early in the program do not answer the questions which later may be asked of them. This is in part unavoidable, since one of the common characteristics of anthropological field work is the gradual uncovering of hitherto unsuspected features and relationships. Perhaps the only insurance against the risk is the partial one of an initial broad ethnographic survey, covering the situation as widely as possible in hopes that when the problems can later be more narrowly defined, relevant information will be available.

Another approach, but one so liable to error that use of it is clearly a makeshift, is that attempted by Leighton and Smith<sup>44</sup>—the comparison of contemporary data with a hypothetical time "about fifty years ago." The intent was to reconstruct a picture of the seven communities being compared at a time when few if any of the features of modern industrial society had affected them. The reconstruction was based on some documentary evidence (files of local newspapers, local histories, past ethnographies), the recall of informants, and a general knowledge of the cultures of which these communities represented one small segment. In no sense were we attempting to establish the "zero point" of aboriginal stability advocated by Mair,<sup>45</sup> who was sharply criticized in the same memorandum by Malinowski and others for her position. We were simply attempting to provide some perspective on the contemporary situation; the extent to which we may have been unsuccessful for at least one of the villages has been pointed out recently by Morris Opler.<sup>46</sup> The technique can be recommended only *faute de mieux*, and the results obtained with its use can be regarded as suggestive rather than definitive.

38. A. L. Kroeber, "Critical Summary and Commentary," in Robert F. Spencer (ed.) *Method and Perspective in Anthropology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954, pp. 273-274.

39. Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (eds.) *African Political Systems*. London: Oxford University Press, 1940, p. 5.

40. Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945.

41. Lucy P. Mair (ed.), *Methods of Study of Culture Contact in Africa*. Oxford: International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, Memorandum 15, pp. vii-xxxviii.

42. S. F. Nadel, *The Theory of Social Structure*. London: Cohen and West, 1957, pp. 146-147.

43. *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

44. Alexander H. Leighton and Robert J. Smith, *op. cit.*

45. Lucy P. Mair, "The Place of History in the Study of Culture Contact," in Lucy P. Mair (ed.), *Methods of Study of Culture Contact in Africa*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-8.

46. Morris Edward Opler, "The Extensions of an Indian Village," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 16, 1:5-10 (1956).

Another attempt to meet the problems of studying culture change comparatively in societies with meager or no histories, is that of Redfield, best exhibited in his *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*.<sup>47</sup> There is little concern with history in this work, presumably because he felt that the synchronic study of sufficiently different and intermediate types of communities would yield generalizations about process. He has constructed as the baseline the ideal-typical model of the folk, and in analyzing the degrees of remoteness of his four communities from this model has implied that "process can be analyzed without the need for detailed historical interpretation."<sup>48</sup>

47. See footnote 11, above.

48. Sidney Mintz, "On Redfield and Foster," *American Anthropologist*, 56, 1:90 (1954).

This is all very well, but it would appear that until anthropology is able to make its own historical depth by means of long-term studies, the comparative study of culture change will have to rely on second-best kinds of analysis. And until the entire study can be cast in terms of a genuine theory of culture change, we are unlikely to get very far beyond our "descriptive generalizations." It would be well for anthropology as a whole to consider the view of theory held in others of the behavioral sciences, that even a bad theory is better than none, for it will yield hypotheses subject to testing, modification and elaboration or rejection. By means of theory much research is generated, and the result is a constant sharpening of the questions to be asked. As long as any question at all will do, precision of inquiry is unlikely to develop.

## Minutes of the 1957 Annual Business Meeting

The annual business meeting was held on Saturday, June 1, 1957, 11:00 a.m., at the Kellogg Center for Continuing Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan. Dr. Gordon Macgregor presided.

### 1. Report of the President

Since the Society's meeting last year in Cambridge, the headquarters and editorial offices have been moved to Ithaca, New York. Dr. William F. Whyte has taken over the editorship and general supervision of the Society's business affairs.

The move was not accomplished without some difficulty. In taking over both the business affairs and correspondence, it has been necessary to appoint an editorial assistant and executive secretary, divorcing the two activities which had been managed by Elizabeth Purcell for many years in the New York office. Taking over the books and records without the guidance of the former administrative secretary has taken time and involved hard labor. A more systematic business operation has now been established, and the office runs smoothly.

Dr. Whyte has been saddled with larger responsibilities than he bargained for. An expression of appreciation is certainly due him for the magnificent way in which he has managed both the affairs of the Society and the editorship of the journal. The new employees should also be commended for their conscientious services in setting our records in order.

The invitation of the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University to place our offices in its establishment has increased our ability to operate effectively and to greatly reduce our overhead. The arrangement has been of distinct advantage from many points of view. The Society is greatly indebted and owes Cornell and the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations a warm expression of appreciation.

We have by no means overcome our basic problems. With publication of our next issue, the Society will continue to operate in the red. The Editor's attempt to help the Society and the journal financially through a supporting grant from the Ford Foundation, has been blocked by the latter's reorganization. To obtain needed funds, a new application to Ford or some other Foundation will be necessary.

The special issue on Latin America has brought in new members and some additional funds from sales. A grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc. made publication of this special issue possible.

The problem remains for us to explore new means and to adopt definite action for the promotion of new membership. This must be prompt and constructive. This exploration should lead into an inquiry as to why membership in recent years has been almost standing still. There has been a serious dropping-off of old members and resignations—not without some specific criticisms of past management and editorial policy.

Promotion of new membership will require a reexamination of our audience and of our market, and of the expectations of members and potential members.

The Executive Committee proposed an assessment of applied anthropology this year, and it seems very timely that the Society itself should make a reexamination of its aims and objectives, and of its role in serving professional anthropologists and scientists of related fields. This problem is directly related to the promotion of new membership, if not to the future of the Society itself.

In turning his office over to a new president, Dr. Macgregor strongly urged that a special advisory committee, selected from past presidents and members keenly interested in the Society's welfare and younger members representing